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German bus driver kicked Semtex drone out of the air

‘Daring and courageous’ airport worker may have stopped Russian terror attack

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A drone carrying explosives was discovered near a Ukrainian Antonov cargo plane at Leipzig/Halle airport in Saxony Credit: Jens Schlueter/Getty Images

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A German airport worker kicked an explosive drone out of the air, preventing a potentially catastrophic attack.

The bus driver at Leipzig/Halle Airport saw the drone flying low close to a Ukrainian cargo plane believed to have been carrying weapons.

The drone was packed with Semtex but failed to explode as the detonator was broken off.

The airport plays a key role in the transportation of military goods, including for the German military and Nato allies, and serves as a base for Antonov jets.

Detlef Seif, a German MP, said on Friday: “A bus driver kicked the drone away while it was flying low. It then crashed and came to rest on the ground.

“The bus driver’s action was very daring and courageous, but also very dangerous. It is possible that his intervention prevented the intended attack.”

The drone discovered at Leipzig/Halle airport which was carrying the explosive package Credit: Bild

Armin Schuster, the interior minister for the state of Saxony, where Leipzig/Halle airport is located, praised the bus driver's actions.

"But it's not a model to be emulated. Letting us know would be enough," Mr Schuster told MDR, a public broadcaster.

The discovery of the drone caused the airport to be shut down and triggered crisis meetings with German intelligence chiefs.

A second DHL cargo plane also collided with an unidentified device shortly after take off from the airport. It landed in Hanover with minor damage.

A counter-terrorism investigation was launched after the incident, which Alexander Dobrindt, Germany's interior minister, said showed a "new level of threat".

"All of this does not point to an amateurish approach. We are talking about a professional, hybrid threat scenario that we will continue to address," he said.

Mr Dobrindt also said the attack "may involve foreign powers" as Russia was blamed for the incident.

An explosives expert examining a drone at Leipzig/Halle airport Credit: Axel Schmidt/Reuters

Oleksii Makeiev, Ukraine's ambassador to Germany, voiced his belief that Moscow was behind the incident, telling the German television channel Welt: "Who else could it be but Russia?"

Konstantin von Notz, a German Green Party spokesman on intelligence oversight, also suggested Russian involvement.

He said: "This would constitute not merely terrorism but state terrorism directed against Germany and its citizens if it transpires that a state is behind this."

Moscow has denied any involvement.

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Speculation that the Ukrainian cargo planes involved in the incident could have been carrying ammunition has been dismissed.

“The Antonov aircraft in question were empty at the time of the incident and therefore carried no cargo,” Maret Montavon, of the aerospace company Mitteldeutsche Flughafen, said.

German airports have been under high alert following several unauthorised drone flights, with calls for better protection at airports in response.

Germany and other European countries have repeatedly observed instances of drones flying over sensitive sites such as airports, military bases and industrial plants.

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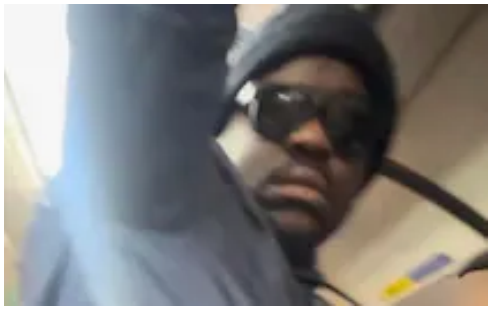

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